

FILM

12th Kolkata Film Festival

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Mounting tributes to Ingmar Bergman (Sweden), Jan Nemeč (Czech Republic) Miguel Littin (Chile), Nanni Moretti (Italy), Jeon Soo-il (South Korea), Bela Tan (Hungary), Zsolt Kezdi-Kovals (Hungary), and Patrice Chereav (France), along with selections from contemporary world and Indian Cinema, the 12th Kolkata Film Festival celebrated the lively, visual art once again, Anders Thomas Jensen's **"Adam's Apples"** (Denmark, colour, 94 mins, 2005) examines prisoners on parole, attached to the seminary of a Protestant Church. A convict, Adam (Ulrich Thomsen), getting down from a bus, scratches the body of the moving bus with a knife. The vicar, Ivan (Mads Mikkelsen) receives him, with a car. Having been in prison, Adam is protective over his bag. He is neo-Nazi, and his curriculum vitae describes him as 'evil'. The vicar who is generous, and sees only good all around, tells Adam that if one looks for evil, then the world is evil.

The vicarage has a small church, and large lawns. All those on parole are given a goal. An apple tree in the meadow becomes the mute spectator to the struggle between good and evil. Adam is given the community service of baking an apple pie, from the apples from the apple tree. Fellow interns Khalid and Gunnar are rapists and robbers. The vicar observes the violence and ill manners of Adam and the inmates as "rudeness". Adam removes, the cross from his room wall, and puts up Hitler's Photo. The church compound is the rehabilitron hospital, with medical facilities and a doctor. At night when Gunnar tries to steal Adam's cell phone and wallet, Adam punches him. Birds peel at the apples on the tree. In disgust Adam enters the church. A crucifix, stuffed with branches and leaves is converted to a scarecrow, A villager Sarah (Ote Thestrup) comes crying, and is offered cookies in the refectory. She had a boyfriend in Indonesia, while on aid charity duties, and is now pregnant. She does not know who the father is. There is a sixty percent chance that the child will be handicapped. While Sarah is intimidated by statistics and reason, the vicar feels that the devil is testing. The right choices have to be made, and Ivan advises to have the baby.

Sebastian Blenkov's camera has sudden shifts. A flock of birds zoom over. Church bells shake the building. The doctor informs that Ivan's mother died at his birth, and he grew up with his father and sister. When Ivan's hand is burnt by a stove, he analyses that satan is pressurising : Not to go near the store, not to make a pie. Gunnar was at one time the best tennis player; but now he drinks excessively. An old friend from the village gives Adam a cutter. Khalid shoots a white cat on the apple tree. Gunnar's wife had committed suicide, after the birth of a disabled child. The camera backtracks over the dead birds. Poul is 80 years old, and had worked with Goebbels at a concentration camp. Ivan says all is forgiven, which is the word of God. Soon Poul dies. Linda, Ivan's wife died of an overdose of sedatives, accidentally spilled in a milk bowl, by son Christopher, who is mentally disabled suffering from brain palsey, and to a wheel chair. But Adam suspects that Linda committed suicide.

Inside the church, Adam tells Ivan to give up his beliefs, and hits him. The campus doctor informs that Ivan is suffering from brain tumour. Ivan is not upset with the experience of pain, and finds explanations, to live with it. He enjoys denial of everything. The apples on the tree are rotten with worms. At Poul's funeral service, the vicar preaches that good prevails, in spite of all cruelty. Storms gather in the dark sky, while hymns are sung.

Adam refers to the Book of Job, and tells Ivan that God is not on his side. Ivan faints and falls on the church floor. In the thunder and rains, the crucifix in the garden is bereft of all branches. There is a short circuit in the kitchen. Lighting strikes down the apple tree, with fire. Ivan returns to his senses in hospital. Some neo-nazi goons visit the church grounds. Neo-nazi and racist remarks lead to a brawl. Khalid shoots from a gun, and injures three, Sarah is drunk in Gunnar's bed. Khalid, Gunnar and Adam shoot around, and rob a store. Adam picks up a cooking pan, but Sarah has eaten up all the apples. The punks return in larger numbers, and beat up Adam. They shoot Ivan on the head, and the tumour bursts. Khalid leaves for Saudi Arabia. Gunnar returns a stolen apple, which Adam bakes into a cake; and takes it to hospital for Ivan. Sarah's child is born, and is baptised by Ivan. Adam's shaven head gives way to long hair. Two new convicts arrive, and Adam and Ivan welcome them to the Church home.

"Adam's Apples" intensely conjures incarceration, eerie dislocation, physical afflictions and violence. The visual motifs of empty spaces, isolated apple tree, crucifix, Bible, and church bells permeate the cinematography. The protagonists deal with weird people, isolation, rehabilitation and beliefs. A blue tinge splashes the images. Deft cross-cutting links events and episodes, leading to the tensions and disagreements. In the unnerving atmosphere, some of the set pieces are funny.

IBERIA

Carlos Saura's "Iberia" (Spain, 2005, colour, 99 mins) is based on musical pieces by Iza Iberiz, the 19th century musical composer. The images of pivoting, glides and high kicking choreography build a spectacle of dance and illusion, which steadily proceeds to a surreal other world of toe-tapping, weightlessly floating dancers. The dramatically lit compositions are especially effective in making the dazzling ensemble of dancers, emotionally captivating. The stage is sparse with panels, lights, cameras, projection equipments and musical instruments. In "Evocation", the Flamenco dancers create the staccato din of heels. The classical music flows and glides, as the pianist controls the tempo with passionate conviction of the interpretation. The dancers create pulsating patterns, and shift around vertical banks of lights. Little children perform classical dance steps, with rock movements in "Aragon". Large screens reflect the dancers on stage. Songs ring with the band of drums and guitars. Adults join in with slow waltz and pirouettes, and clasp symbols. The circular pirouettes lead to swooping and soaring images. Sitting postures on chairs to fast waltzes is a visual treat in "Bajo la Palmera." The music of violin, double brass, flute and guitars places the dancers in dark silhouette, against panels of orange, red and lemon. "Granada" presents a man in a suit with dishevelled hair. The jigs and the whirls are caught in photo projections on the background panels, creating double images. The reverberations of dance movements alternate in shadows. Women in black, with head covered in veils introduce "Cordoba". The dancers sway to strains of drums and strings of North African Music. There are scenes where colour is drained to black and white. Soon

emerge blue dresses, blue gowns, white robes with white head coverings, creating images of multiple choreography.

In “Cadiz”, the saxophone takes the lead in the jazz score of rock music. The movements and acrobatics of the rock dancers offer inventions in flamenco taps, to the strains of the trombone and brass music. A dancing couple portray classical movements, to piano accompaniment in “Triana”. 19th century photos and film projections inter-cut to make a joyous rendering. “Torre Bermaja” offers a moon and blue sky backdrop, on the wall interiors. Elderly ladies in full robes dance to the melody of guitars, strings, harmonica and drums, Rhymes are chanted with the beats. A large group of dancers, tap dance in rock fusion, in “Almeria”. “Corpus Sevilla” has brass bands, trombones and trumpets. Women with embroidered capes and black costumes are in hectic swings and leaps. The camera tracks the feet movements. A diva sings in “Rondena”. There are symmetrical projections on the wall panels of the female dancers in white costumes. In “El Baicin”, there is an interpolation of a pre-footage of a single female dancer, in the dressing room, being adorned with a matador’s costume. The background full moon and blue sky stare down on the small lit on stage, and the sole dancer. The dancer picks up a large shawl, and swirls in the solo dance of swirling movements and foot tapping conjuring a bull fight.

While the red panels glow in red, the dodgy rapping of drums and flute, provoke the fire dancers in “Zortziko”, to exquisitely phrase their steps. “El Puerto” has vocals and show tunes to allow two male dancers to tap, and produce lady-length ripples, with trembling outstretched feet. There is a male vocal, with guitar accompaniment. The oboe and cello dominate in “Asturias”, and offer symmetry to the flamenco. In “El Albakin”, against shadows on the stage walls, a girl dances wearing chiffon, and sometimes enwrapped in sheets and special effects. Young girls dance contemporary rock in “Sevilla”, to the melody of guitars and bongo drums. Adults join in and the seniors instruct the younger lot. Overhead shots capture the riveting dances. Sounds of thunder and lighting herald pouring rain. The performers disperse, while a couple dances in the rains. Stalwart staging and choreography enables Savra to summarise the various dance forms in the Iberian Peninsular. The compilation music by Roque Banos, keeps the dance action going. Jose Luis Lopez Linares’ camera never misses the jigs and the jumps. The lead dancers, Sara Baras and Antonio Canales, unravel the skitter-stagger movements, and the ensemble dancers essay an emotional content. ~~████~~